



Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB0296 Housing and Community Development – Whole-Home Repairs Act of 2023
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Person Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 14, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB296. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and environmental advocacy organizations focused on climate justice.

We urge you to vote favorably for SB296. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Program (Program) to provide grants for repairs to low-income, owner-occupied homes and loans for small landlord rental units to address habitability concerns. The bill will create a Whole-Home Repairs Fund (Fund) to support the grant and loan programs, improve coordination across home repair programs, and increase retention in workforce development programs. The Fund will consist of appropriated state dollars, federal funds, and other funds that benefit the Program.

While there are several state and federal programs that fund weatherization, health and safety repairs, and energy efficiency upgrades, Maryland has no wholistic approach to covering all the repair needs of a property, especially for habitability concerns such as roof repairs, water leaks, or other structural issues. These issues must be addressed first, before a property can be sealed and insulated, get efficiency upgrades (e.g., heating/cooling systems), or have solar panels installed.

SB296 is intended to fill this gap. It will provide a key tool to address the Maryland Commission on Climate Change’s recommendation to “retrofit 100% of low-income households by 2030.” The 2021 *Building Energy Transition Plan* recommended that the state provide funding to DHCD, the Maryland Energy Administration, and local governments and organizations to offer little-to-no upfront cost comprehensive low-income home retrofits, including dedicated funds to address safety and health and electrical upgrades needed before weatherization, energy efficiency, and electrification projects can be completed. A focus on low-income households is

critical, because these households currently have a disproportionately high energy burden which will only increase as gas rates rise.

We also would support any amendments by the sponsor which would promote energy efficiency and conversion from gas to electric appliances and heating and cooling systems. We urge a **FAVORABLE** vote for SB296.